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Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace

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Following is a message to the Congress from President Reagan, March 14, 1986.

I. America's Stake in Regional Security

For more than two generations, the United States has pursued a global foreign policy. Both the causes and consequences of World War II made clear to all Americans that our participation in world affairs, for the rest of the century and beyond, would have to go beyond just the protection of our national territory against direct invasion. We had learned the painful lessons of the 1930s, that there could be no safety in isolation from the rest of the world. Our nation has responsibilities and security interests beyond our borders—in the rest of this hemisphere, in Europe, in the Pacific, in the Middle East, and in other regions—that require strong, confident, and consistent American leadership.

In the past several weeks, we have met these responsibilities—in difficult circumstances—in Haiti and in the Philippines. We have made important proposals for peace in Central America and southern Africa. There and elsewhere, we have acted in the belief that our peaceful and prosperous future can best be assured in a world in which other peoples, too, can determine their own destiny, free of coercion or tyranny from either at home or abroad.

The prospects for such a future—to which America has contributed in innumerable ways—seem brighter than they have been in many years. Yet we cannot ignore the obstacles that stand in its path. We cannot meet our responsibilities and protect our interests without an active diplomacy backed by American economic and military power. We should not expect to solve problems that are insoluble, but we must not be half-hearted when there is a prospect of success. Wishful thinking and stop-and-go commitments will not protect America's interests.

Our foreign policy in the postwar era has sought to enhance our nation's security by pursuit of four fundamental goals:

- We have sought to defend and advance the cause of democracy, freedom, and human rights throughout the world.
- We have sought to promote prosperity and social progress through a free, open, and expanding market-oriented global economy.
- We have worked diplomatically to help resolve dangerous regional conflicts.
- We have worked to reduce and eventually eliminate the danger of nuclear war.

Sustained by a strong bipartisan consensus, these basic principles have weathered contentious domestic debates through eight administrations, both Democratic and Republican. They have survived the great and rapid changes of an ever-evolving world.

There are good reasons for this continuity. These broad goals are linked together, and they, in turn, match both our ideals and our interests. No other policy could command the broad support of the American people.

A foreign policy that ignored the fate of millions around the world who seek freedom would be a betrayal of our national heritage. Our own freedom, and that of our allies, could never be secure in a world where freedom was threatened everywhere else. Our stake in the global economy gives us a stake in the well-being of others.

A foreign policy that overlooked the dangers posed by international conflicts, that did not work to bring them to a peaceful resolution, would be irresponsible—especially in an age of nuclear weapons. These conflicts and the tensions that they generate are, in fact, a major spur to the continued buildup of nuclear arsenals. For this reason, my Administration has made plain that continuing Soviet adventurism in the developing world is inimical to global security and an obstacle to fundamental improvement of Soviet-American relations.

Our stake in resolving regional conflicts can be simply stated: greater freedom for others means greater peace and security for ourselves. These goals threaten no one, but none of them can be achieved without a strong, active, and engaged America.

II. Regional Security in the 1980s

Our efforts to promote freedom, prosperity, and security must take account of the diversity of regional conflicts and of the conditions in which they arise. Most of the world's turbulence has indigenous causes, and not every regional conflict should be viewed as part of the East-West conflict. And we should be alert to historic changes in the international environment, for these create both new problems and new opportunities. Three such realities must define American policies in the 1980s.

Soviet Exploitation of Regional Conflicts. The first involves the nature of the threat we face. The fact is in the 1970s the challenge to regional security became—to a greater degree than before—the challenge of Soviet expansionism. Around the world we saw a new thrust by our adversaries to spread communist dictatorships and to put our own security (and that of friends and allies) at risk. The Soviet Union—and clients like Cuba, Vietnam, and Libya—supplied enormous quantities of money, arms, and training in efforts to destabilize and overthrow vulnerable governments on nearly every continent. By the 1970s the long-proclaimed Soviet doctrine of "wars of national liberation" was for the first time backed by a global capability to project military power. The Soviets appeared to conclude that the global "correlation of forces" was shifting inexorably in their favor.

The world now knows the results, above all the staggering human toll. Murderous policies in Vietnam and Cambodia produced victims on a scale unknown since the genocides of Hitler and Stalin. In Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion led to the terrified flight of millions from their homes. In Ethiopia, we have witnessed death by famine and more recently by forced resettlement; and in South Yemen this year, factional killing that consumed thousands of lives in a span of a few days.

These have been only the most horrifying consequences. Other outgrowths of Soviet policies have been the colonial presence of tens of thousands of Cuban troops in Africa, the activities of terrorists trained in facilities in the Soviet bloc, and the effort to use communist Nicaragua as a base from which to extinguish democracy in El Salvador and beyond.

These are not isolated events. They make up the disturbing pattern of Soviet conduct in the past 15 years. The problems it creates are no less acute because the Soviet Union has had its share of disagreements with some of its clients or because many of these involvements have proved very costly. That the Soviet leadership persists in such policies despite the growing burden they impose only testifies to the strength of Soviet commitment. Unless we build barriers to Soviet ambitions and create incentives for Soviet restraint, Soviet policies will remain a source of danger—and the most important obstacle to the future spread of freedom.

In my meetings and other communications with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, and in my address before the UN General Assembly last October, I have made clear the importance the United States attaches to the resolution of regional conflicts that threaten world peace and the yearning of millions for freedom and independence—whether in Afghanistan or in southern Africa.

For the United States, these conflicts cannot be regarded as peripheral to other issues on the global agenda. They raise fundamental issues and are a fundamental part of the overall U.S.-Soviet relationship. Their resolution would represent a crucial step toward the kind of world that all Americans seek and have been seeking for over 40 years.

Joining Others' Strength to Ours. The second reality that shapes America's approach to regional security is the need to join our own strength to the efforts of others in working toward our common goals.

Throughout the postwar period, our country has played an enormous role in helping other nations, in many parts of the world, to protect their freedom. Through NATO we committed ourselves to the defense of Europe against Soviet attack. Through the Marshall Plan we helped Western Europe to rebuild its economy and strengthen democratic institutions. We sent American troops to Korea to repel a communist invasion. America was an ardent champion of decolonization. We provided security assistance to help friends and allies around the world defend themselves. We extended our hand to those governments that sought to free themselves from dependence on the Soviet Union; success in such efforts—whether by Yugoslavia, Egypt, China, or others—has contributed significantly to international security.

Despite our economic and military strength and our leading political role, the pursuit of American goals has always required cooperation with like-minded partners. The problems we face today, however, make cooperation with others even more important. This is, in part, a result of the limits on our own resources, of the steady growth in the power of our adversaries, and of the American people's understandable reluctance to shoulder alone burdens that are properly shared with others. But most important, we want to cooperate with others because of the nature of our goals. Stable regional solutions depend over the long term on what those most directly affected can contribute. If interference by outsiders can be ended, regional security is best protected by the free and independent countries of each region.

The Democratic Revolution. If American policy can succeed only in cooperation with others, then the third critical development of the past decade offers special hope: it is the democratic revolution, a trend that has significantly increased the ranks of those around the world who share America's commitment to national independence and popular rule.

The democracies that survived or emerged from the ruins of the Second World War—Western Europe, Japan, and a handful of others—have now been joined by many others across the globe. Here in the Western Hemisphere, the 1980s have been a decade of transition to democracy. Today, over 90% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean live under governments that are democratic—in contrast to only one-third a decade ago. In less than 6 years, popularly elected democrats have replaced dictators in Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, and Grenada.

In other parts of the world, we see friends and allies moving in the same direction. Earlier in this decade, the people of Turkey fought back a violent assault on democracy from both left and right. Similarly, since the fall of Vietnam, the noncommunist nations of Southeast Asia have rallied together; with prosperous economies and effective, increasingly democratic national governments, they play an increasingly important role on the world stage.

These trends are far from accidental. Ours is a time of enormous social and technological change everywhere, and one country after another is discovering that only free peoples can make the most of this change. Countries that want progress without pluralism, without freedom, are finding that it cannot be done.

In this global revolution, there can be no doubt where America stands. The

American people believe in human rights and oppose tyranny in whatever form, whether of the left or the right. We use our influence to encourage democratic change, in careful ways that respect other countries' traditions and political realities as well as the security threats that many of them face from external or internal forces of totalitarianism.

The people of the Philippines are now revitalizing their democratic traditions. The people of Haiti have their first chance in three decades to direct their own affairs. Advocates of peaceful political change in South Africa are seeking an alternative to violence as well as to apartheid. All these efforts evoke the deepest American sympathy. American support will be ready, in these countries and elsewhere, to help democracy succeed.

But the democratic revolution does not stop here. There is another, newer phenomenon as well. In recent years, Soviet ambitions in the developing world have run head-on into a new form of resistance. Peoples on every continent are insisting on their right to national independence and their right to choose their government free of coercion. The Soviets overreached in the 1970s, at a time when America weakened itself by its internal divisions. In the 1980s the Soviets and their clients are finding it difficult to consolidate these gains—in part because of the revival of American and Western self-confidence but mainly because of the courageous forces of indigenous resistance. Growing resistance movements now challenge communist regimes installed or maintained by the military power of the Soviet Union and its colonial agents—in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua.

We did not create this historical phenomenon, but we must not fail to respond to it.

In Afghanistan, Moscow's invasion to preserve the puppet government it installed has met stiff and growing resistance by Afghans who are fighting and dying for their country's independence. Democratic forces in Cambodia, once all but annihilated by the Khmer Rouge, are now waging a similar battle against occupation and a puppet regime imposed by communist Vietnam.

In Angola, Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] forces have waged an armed struggle against the Soviet- and Cuban-backed Marxist regime, and in recent years UNITA has steadily expanded the territory under its control.

In Nicaragua, the democratic resistance forces fighting against another Soviet- and Cuban-backed regime have been holding their own—despite their lack of significant outside help and despite the massive influx of the most sophisticated Soviet weaponry and thousands of Soviet, Cuban, and Soviet-bloc advisers.

The failure of these Soviet client regimes to consolidate themselves only confirms the moral and political bankruptcy of the Leninist model. No one can be surprised by this. But it also reflects the dangerous and destabilizing international impact that even unpopular Leninist regimes can have. None of these struggles is a purely internal one. As I told the UN General Assembly last year, the assault of such regimes on their own people inevitably becomes a menace to their neighbors. Hence the threats to Pakistan and Thailand by the powerful occupying armies in Afghanistan and Cambodia. Hence the insecurity of El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras in the face of the Nicaraguan military buildup.

Soviet-style dictatorships, in short, are an almost unique threat to peace, both before and after they consolidate their rule—*before*, because the war they wage against their own people does not always stay within their own borders, and *after*, because the elimination of opposition at home frees their hand for subversion abroad. Cuba's foreign adventures of the past decade are a warning to the neighbors of communist regimes everywhere.

The drive for national freedom and popular rule takes different forms in different countries, for each nation is the authentic product of a unique history and culture. In one case, a people's resistance may spring from deep religious belief; in another, from the bonds of ethnic or tribal solidarity; in yet another, from the grievances of colonial rule or from the failure of an alien ideology to contribute to national progress. Our traditions and the traditions of those whom we help can hardly be identical. And their programs will not always match our own experience and preferences. This is to be expected. The real question is: can our policy—of active American support—increase the likelihood of democratic outcomes? I believe it can.

III. The Tools of American Policy

These three realities of the 1980s—the new thrust of Soviet interventionism, the need for free nations to join together, the democratic revolution—are inseparable. Soviet power and policy cannot be checked without the active commitment of the United States. And we cannot achieve lasting results without giving support to—and receiving support from—those whose goals coincide with ours.

These realities call for new ways of thinking about how to cope with the challenge of Soviet power. Since Harry Truman's day, through administrations of both parties, American policy toward the Soviet Union has consistently set itself the goal of containing Soviet expansionism. Today, that goal is more relevant and more important than ever. But how do we achieve it in today's new conditions?

First of all, we must face up to the arrogant Soviet pretension known as the Brezhnev doctrine: the claim that Soviet gains are irreversible; that once a Soviet client begins to oppress its people and threaten its neighbors it must be allowed to oppress and threaten them forever. This claim has no moral or political validity whatsoever. Regimes that cannot live in peace with either their own people or their neighbors forfeit their legitimacy in world affairs.

Second, we must take full account of the striking trend that I have mentioned: the growing ranks of those who share our interests and values. In 1945 so much of the burden of defending freedom rested on our shoulders alone. In the 1970s some Americans were pessimistic about whether our values of democracy and freedom were relevant to the new developing nations. Now we know the answer. The growing appeal of democracy, the desire of *all* nations for true independence, are the hopeful basis for a new world of peace and security into the next century. A world of diversity, a world in which other nations choose their own course freely, is fully consistent with our values—because we know free peoples never choose tyranny.

To promote these goals, America has a range of foreign policy tools. Our involvement should always be prudent and realistic, but we should remember that our tools work best when joined together in a coherent strategy consistently applied. Diplomacy unsupported by power is mere talk. Power that is not guided by our political purposes can create nothing of permanent value.

The two tools of U.S. policy without which few American interests will be secure are our own military strength and the vitality of our economy. The defense forces of the United States are crucial to maintaining the stable environment in which diplomacy can be effective, in

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which our friends and allies can be confident of our protection, and in which our adversaries can be deterred. And our economic dynamism not only provides the resources essential to sustain our policies but conveys a deeper message that is being better understood all the time, even by our adversaries: free, pluralist societies *work*.

The failure to maintain our military capabilities and our economic strength in the 1970s was as important as any other single factor in encouraging Soviet expansionism. By reviving both of them in the 1980s, we deny our adversaries opportunities and deter aggression. We make it easier for other countries to launch sustained economic growth, to build popular institutions, and to contribute on their own to the cause of peace.

Security Assistance and Arms Transfers. When Soviet policy succeeds in establishing a regional foothold—whether through invasion, as in Afghanistan or Cambodia, or sponsorship of local Leninists as in Nicaragua—our first priority must be to bolster the security of friends most directly threatened. This has been the reason for increasing our security assistance for Pakistan, Thailand, and the friendly democratic states of Central America. U.S. aid to Pakistan has been indispensable in demonstrating that we will not permit the Soviet Union to gain hegemony over all within reach of its growing power. By raising and sustaining aid to El Salvador after the communist guerrillas' failed "final offensive" of 1981, we showed that controversy here at home could not stop us from backing a friendly and democratic government under threat.

Similarly, by providing needed equipment to friends in the Middle East—whether to democratic Israel or to longstanding friends in the Arab world who face clear and present radical threats—we contribute to stability and peace in a vital region of the world.

By supporting the efforts of others to strengthen their own defense, we frequently do as much for our own security as through our own defense budget. Security assistance to others is a security bargain for us. We must, however, remember that states hostile to us seek the same sort of bargains at our expense. For this reason, we must be sure that the resources we commit are adequate to the job. In the first half of this decade, Libyan and Iranian aid to communist Nicaragua, for example, totaled more than three times as much as U.S. aid to the democratic opposition. Soviet assistance to Vietnam, at nearly $2 billion annually, far outstrips U.S. support for any country save those that signed the Camp David peace accords. Soviet support for Cuba is larger still.

Economic Assistance. In speaking of Central America in 1982, I said that "... economic disaster [had] provided a fresh opening to the enemies of freedom, national independence, and peaceful development." We cannot indulge the hope that economic responses alone are enough to prevent this political exploitation, but an effective American policy must address both the short-term and long-term dimensions of economic distress. In the short term, our goal is stabilization; in the long term, sustained growth and progress by encouraging market-oriented reform.

In Central America, for example, the dollar value of our economic aid has consistently been three, four, or five times as much as our security assistance. In 1985 the former totaled $975 million; the latter, only $227 million.

Over the long term, America's most effective contribution to self-sustaining growth is not through direct aid but through helping these economies to earn their own way. The vigorous expansion of our own economy has already spurred growth throughout the Western Hemisphere, as well as elsewhere. But this healthy expansion of the global economy—which benefits us as well as others—depends crucially on maintaining a fair and open trading system. Protectionism is both dangerous and expensive. Its costs include not only the waste of resources and higher prices in our own economy but also the blow to poorer nations around the world that are struggling for democracy but vulnerable to antidemocratic subversion.

Diplomatic Initiatives. Some have argued that the regional wars in which the Soviet Union is embroiled provide an opportunity to "bleed" the Soviets. This is not our policy. We consider these wars dangerous to U.S.-Soviet relations and tragic for the suffering peoples directly involved.

For those reasons, military solutions are not the goal of American policy. International peace and security require both sides in these struggles to be prepared to lay down their arms and negotiate political solutions. The forms of such negotiations may vary, but in all of these conflicts, political efforts (and the improvement of internal political conditions) are essential to ending the violence, promoting freedom and national self-determination, and bringing real hope for regional security.

With these goals in mind, in my address to the UN General Assembly last fall, I put forward a plan for beginning to resolve a series of regional conflicts in which Leninist regimes have made war against their own peoples. My initiative was meant to complement diplomatic efforts already underway. To all of these efforts the United States has given the strongest possible support. We have done so despite the fact that the Soviet Union and its clients have usually resisted negotiations or have approached the table primarily for tactical purposes. We intend, in fact, to redouble our effort through a series of bilateral discussions with the Soviets.

In Afghanistan, we strongly support the diplomatic efforts conducted under UN auspices. We see no clear sign that the Soviet Union has faced up to the necessity of withdrawing its troops, which remains the central issue of the negotiations. But we will persist.

In southern Africa, the recent announcement by the South African Government of a date for the creation of an independent Namibia provides a new test of its own and of the Angolan regime's interest in a settlement that truly begins to reduce the threats to security in this region.

In Central America, President Duarte of El Salvador has offered a bold initiative that would produce three sets of simultaneous peace talks—his own with El Salvador's communist guerrillas; U.S.-Nicaragua bilateral discussions; and an internal dialogue between the communist regime in Nicaragua and the democratic opposition—if the Sandinistas will agree to the latter. My new envoy for Central America, Ambassador Philip Habib, will pursue the Duarte initiative as his first responsibility.

In Cambodia, we support ASEAN—the Association of South East Asian Nations—in its intensive diplomatic efforts to promote Cambodian self-determination and an end to Vietnam's brutal occupation.

Support for Freedom Fighters. In all these regions, the Soviet Union and its clients would, of course, prefer victory to compromise. That is why in Afghanistan, in Southeast Asia, in southern Africa, and in Central America, diplomatic hopes depend on whether the Soviets see that victory is excluded. In each case, resistance forces fighting against communist tyranny deserve our support.

The form and extent of support we provide must be carefully weighed in each case. Because a popularly supported insurgency enjoys some natural

military advantages, our help need not always be massive to make a difference. But it must be more than simply symbolic: our help should give freedom fighters the chance to rally the people to their side. As John Kennedy observed of another nation striving to protect its freedom, it is ultimately their struggle; winning inevitably depends more on them than on any outsiders. America cannot fight everyone's battle for freedom. But we must not deny others the chance to fight their battle themselves.

In some instances, American interests will be served best if we can keep the details of our help—in particular, how it is provided—out of view. The Soviets will bring enormous pressure to bear to stop outside help to resistance forces; while we can well withstand the pressure, small friends and allies may be much more vulnerable. That is why publicity for such details sometimes only exposes those whom we are trying to help, or those who are helping us, to greater danger. When this is the case, a president must be able to work with the Congress to extend needed support without publicity. Those who make it hard to extend support in this way when necessary are taking from our hands an important tool to protect American interests. Other governments that find they cannot work with us on a confidential basis will often be forced not to work with us at all. To hobble ourselves in this way makes it harder to shape events while problems are still manageable. It means we are certain to face starker choices down the road.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Central America. The Nicaraguan communists have actively sought to subvert their neighbors since the very moment they took power. There can be no regional peace in Central America—or wherever Soviet client regimes have taken power—so long as such aggressive policies face no resistance. Support for resistance forces shows those who threaten the peace that they have no military option and that negotiations represent the only realistic course.

Communist rulers do not voluntarily or in a single step relinquish control and open their nations to popular rule. But there is no historical basis for thinking that Leninist regimes are the only ones that can indefinitely ignore armed insurgencies and the disintegration of their own political base. The conditions that a growing insurgency can create—high military desertion rates, general strikes economic shortages, infrastructural breakdowns, to name just a few—can, in turn, create policy fissures even within a leadership that has had no change of heart.

This is the opportunity that the freedom fighters of the 1980s hope to seize, but it will not exist forever, either in Central America or elsewhere. When the mechanisms of repression are fully in place and consolidated, the task of countering such a regime's policies—both internal and external—becomes incomparably harder. That is why the Nicaraguan regime is so bent on extinguishing the vestiges of pluralism in Nicaraguan society. It is why our own decisions can no longer be deferred.

IV. Regional Security and U.S.-Soviet Relations

My Administration has insisted that the issue of regional security must have a prominent place on the agenda of U.S.-Soviet relations.

We have heard it said, however, that while talking about these issues is a good idea, the United States should not be involved in other ways. Some people see risks of confrontation with the Soviet Union; others, no chance that the Soviets would ever reduce their commitment to their clients.

I challenge both of these views. A policy whose only goal was to pour fuel on existing fires would obviously be irresponsible, but America's approach is completely different. Our policy is designed to keep regional conflicts from spreading and thereby to reduce the risk of superpower confrontations. Our aim is not to increase the dangers to which regional states friendly to us are exposed but to reduce them. We do so by making clear to the Soviet Union and its clients that we will stand behind our friends. Talk alone will not accomplish this. That is why our security assistance package for Pakistan—and for Thailand and Zaire—is so important, and why we have increased our help to democratic states of Central America. We have made clear that there would be no gain from widening these conflicts. We have done so without embroiling American forces in struggles that others are ready to fight on their own.

Our goal, in short—indeed, our necessity—is to convince the Soviet Union that the policies on which it embarked in the 1970s *cannot work*. We cannot be completely sure how the Soviet leadership calculates the benefits of relationships with clients. No one should underestimate the tenacity of such a powerful and resilient opponent.

Yet there are reasons to think that the present time is especially propitious for raising doubts on the Soviet side about the wisdom of its client ties. The same facts about the democratic revolution that we can see are visible in Moscow. The harmful impact that Moscow's conduct in the developing world had on Western readings of its intentions in the last decade is also well known. There is no time in which Soviet policy reviews and reassessments are more likely than in a succession period, especially when many problems have been accumulating for some time. General Secretary Gorbachev himself made this point last year when he asked American interviewers whether it wasn't clear that the Soviet Union required international calm to deal with its internal problems.

Our answer to this question can be very simple. We desire calm, too, and—even more to the point—so do the nations now embroiled in conflict with regimes enjoying massive Soviet support. Let the Soviet Union begin to contribute to the peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

V. Conclusion

I have often said that the tide of the future is a freedom tide. If so, it is also a peace tide, for the surest guarantee we have of peace is national freedom and democratic government.

In the long struggle to reach these goals, we are at a crossroads. A great deal hangs on America's staying power and steadfast commitment.

- If America stays committed, we are more likely to have diplomatic solutions than military ones.
- If America stays committed, we are more likely to have democratic outcomes than totalitarian ones.
- If America stays committed, we will find that those who share our goals can do their part and ease burdens that we might otherwise bear alone.
- If America stays committed, we can solve problems while they are still manageable and avoid harder choices later.
- And if America stays committed, we are more likely to convince the Soviet Union that its competition with us must be peaceful.

The American people remain committed to a world of peace and freedom. They want an effective foreign policy, which shapes events in accordance with our ideals and does not just react, passively and timidly, to the actions of others. Backing away from this challenge will not bring peace. It will only

mean that others who are hostile to everything we believe in will have a freer hand to work their will in the world.

Important choices now rest with the Congress: whether to undercut the President at a moment when regional negotiations are underway and U.S.-Soviet diplomacy is entering a new phase; to betray those struggling against tyranny in different regions of the world, including our own neighborhood; or to join in a bipartisan national endeavor to strengthen both freedom and peace.

I have no doubt which course the American people want.

RONALD REAGAN ■

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